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INFO RUCNCOM/EC CARICOM COLLECTIVE
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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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STATE FOR WHA/CAR

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [TD](#)
SUBJECT: PNM WINS NATIONAL ELECTIONS

REF: PORT OF SPAIN 1106 AND PREVIOUS

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED, PLEASE PROTECT ACCORDINGLY

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Led by Prime Minister Patrick Manning, the People's National Movement (PNM) scored a convincing victory November 5, winning 26 of 41 seats in Parliament. The United National Congress (UNC) won the remaining 15, with the newly formed Congress of the People (COP) being "blanked." Voting was peaceful, with no major incidents reported. Informal comments by CARICOM observers while the voting was in progress were positive. The PM will be sworn in November 7 and is expected soon after to name his cabinet. Given the continuation of the current PM in office, GOTT policies are unlikely to change in any major way. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) The PNM won 26 seats (in line with ref predictions) in yesterday's parliamentary elections, holding onto its traditional strongholds and winning several marginal seats. The PNM won in the north and south of Trinidad and also got both Tobago seats, while the UNC won in the central part of the island. Voting tended to follow ethnic divisions, with the PNM garnering the majority of the Afo-Trini votes and the UNC and COP many of the Ino-Trini votes. Nonetheless, all parties sought an appeal to the entire electorate and four Indo-Trinis won on the PNM ticket and two Afro-Trinis, including party financier Jack Warner, won as UNC candidates. UNC Party leader Basdeo Pandey again on his seat.

¶3. (SBU) The COP was "blanked" (sht out), with even party head Winston Dookeran failing to secure a seat (his constituency was won by the UNC). The COP drew more votes away from the UNC than it did from the PNM, and may have enabled the PNM to gain some marginal seats by splitting the opposition vote. Although it is not a certainty that a UNC-COP coalition could have defeated the PNM, once last night's voting trend was clear, Pandey blasted Dookeran for spurning earlier unity pleas. Taking a somewhat higher road, Dookeran congratulated the PNM and UNC for their victories, stated that the country was not yet ready for his "new type of politics," and expressed hope the COP would continue to build its base for the next election.

¶4. (SBU) Manning will be sworn in as Prime Minister November 7; he is expected to name his cabinet soon thereafter. GOTT policies are not likely to change radically; the PNM's campaign platform was based on "Plan 2020," the master plan for Trinidad and Tobago achieving first world status by 2020. Foreign policy was not a major issue in the campaign and no major course corrections are expected.

¶5. (SBU) Although many businesses and offices closed at 2:00 PM on Election Day, the expected afternoon surge of voters did not materialize. Turnout figures are not yet complete, but appear below the 2002 figure of 69.64 percent. Informal

observation of several polling places by Embassy officers (and the British High Commission) found the vote peaceful and free from any intimidation; CARICOM observers speaking while voting was taking place also praised Trinidadians for their civic mindedness and electoral manners.

AUSTIN